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A residential program for 150 disadvantaged junior high school students from both urban and rural areas of New York was conducted at Skidmore College. A part of Programs to Excite Potential (PEP), this pilot project is based on the hypothesis that a multisensory art experience can stimulate academic motivation and strengthen the self-confidence of underachieving students. Development of constructive human relationships is another objective of the project. Students attended classes in music, dance, arts or crafts, communications or theater, and science or typing. Cultural events and trips were also featured. It is noted that anti-social behavior was a problem in this group of adolescents. This PEP experience is currently (1967) being evaluated but a tentative estimate indicates that dropout rate was low and students felt that they had benefitted and had gained in self-understanding. (NH)

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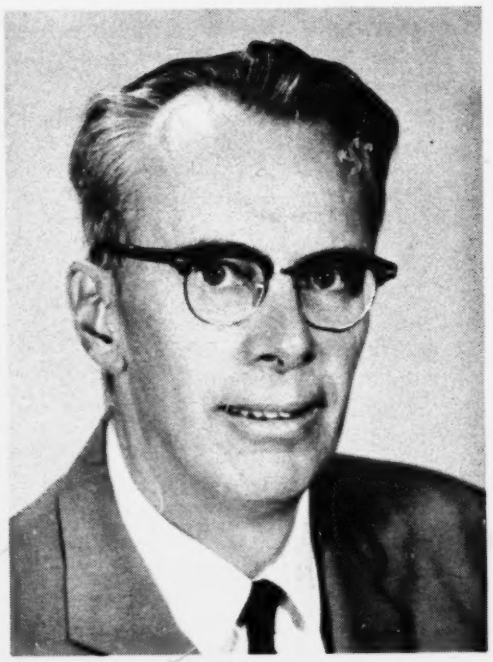


Dr. Horace B. Reed is chairman of the department of education at Skidmore and associate professor of education.

He was graduated from Antioch College with a B.A. degree, obtained his M.A. in teacher training at Putney Graduate School, and his doctoral degree in education at Harvard.

Among his academic honors are fellowships awarded to him for study at Harvard and at the Educational Testing Service, Princeton. He has received grants for research from the New York State Education Department.

For four years, Dr. Reed was director of the Putney Summer Work Camp in Vermont, and has served as Co-ordinator of International Educators at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He was on the editorial board of the Harvard Education Review.

Dr. Reed is a frequent contributor to a wide range of journals in the field of education.

This academic year Dr. Reed is chairman of TECC (Teacher Education Coordination Committee); a member of the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee; a member of the Calendar Revision Sub-Committee of CEPP (Committee on Educational Policy and Planning); and a member of Skidmore's Middle States Self-Evaluation Committee.

Mr. Robert J. Reed, Jr., instructor in art at Skidmore, holds a B.S. degree in art education from Morgan State College in Baltimore, where he was a member of Alpha Kappa Mu honor society and won a departmental award for three successive years. He holds B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees in painting from Yale University, where he won the Bocour Prize, a John Ferguson Weir Scholarship, and the Sidney Kanegis Award.

Mr. Reed has exhibited at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, has had a one-man-show at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and at the Phillips Gallery in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was represented in the United States Information Agency's exhibition of "Painting and Sculpture in American Universities." In June, 1967, he won the Roy W. Johnson Memorial Award at the 18th New England Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture at New Canaan, Connecticut.

SKIDMORE ... *where*

The College participated this summer in PEP (Programs to Excite Potential), a project for 150 economically disadvantaged junior high school boys and girls from ten New York State urban areas. Several of the students were from cities experiencing deep racial unrest. They came from public and private schools, and from varied racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. In addition to the economic factor, criteria for selection included academic underachievement and some interest in one of the performing arts. The students lived on campus for eight weeks, the boys in Skidmore Hall and the girls in Peabody.

Overheard during the first hours and days were several negative comments by students.

"What do you do in this town, anyway. What this place needs. and bad, is some Harlem soul."

"Well, maybe you're going to shut your dorm room door at night; but me, I never slept in a room alone. Baby, my door's going to stay wide open, with the light on."

"You're not going to tell me what to do; nobody, but nobody, tells me what to do but my mother. And I don't listen to her."

PEP, a federally supported project, was initiated by Mrs. Esther Swanker of the New York State Education Department. Sponsored by the New York City Board of Education, PEP was strongly encouraged by that Board's Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Bernard Donovan (Mrs. Jane Fennell Donovan is a Skidmore Alumna, Class of 1938).

President Joseph C. Palamountain, responding to queries about whether Skidmore would be willing to house the project, stated that the College would not only be host to the members, but also was willing to be involved in the total operation of the project. Directing PEP was Mr. John Motley, a competent,

AND PEP . . . *the action is!*

by Dr. Horace B. Reed, Assistant Director of PEP

photographs by Mr. Robert J. Reed, Jr., PEP instructor

charismatic administrator of public school music in New York City, and a Negro educator known for his successful leadership with children from varied backgrounds.

PEP is a pilot study designed to explore whether performing arts media and sound human relations emphases can help build more effective motivations, and help strengthen the self confidence of disadvantaged students. Stressing daily classes in music, dance, graphic arts, theater, and creative expression, the summer program utilized several of Skidmore's buildings. Both the New York City Ballet and the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center provided weekly cultural involvements, as did trips to such art centers as the Williamstown (Mass.) Theater, to see Shaw's *St. Joan*. Each student attended six different classes throughout the summer: introduction to a musical instrument, general music, dance (ballet, modern, and ethnic), arts or crafts, communications or theater, and science or typing.

Small classes, and a staff especially selected to work with these young people, were important features of the project. Of the 42 staff members, several were Skidmore faculty: Miss Nancy L. Comstock, instructor in physical education; Horace Reed; Robert Reed; Mr. Peter Wright, instructor in drama; and several were students: Kristine L. Ford '69, Alexandria M. Halloran '68, Margaret E. Lamar '69, Virginia Shattuck '67, and Catherine M. Traber '68. Oleg Briansky's Skidmore-based Saratoga Ballet Center provided the dance instruction.

The art emphasis is based on the hypothesis that disadvantaged students may be reached through the multisensory nature of the arts. Daily successes in learning a new dance movement, or playing a clarinet, or acting out the puppet's motions in response to commands, or expressing with a paint brush what it feels like when listening to music, or writing impressions of a blindfolded walk through the woods, may strengthen the student's self-confidence and build positive attitudes towards learning new ways of communicating. In contrast with most formal schooling (where the three R's and specific information goals are necessarily emphasized, and where grading is based on external standards), PEP stresses participating in an encouraging world, discovering new interests, bringing out potentials, and evaluating on the basis of internal standards of a student's successes today compared with yesterday's.

A concern for developing constructive human relationships is another main theme of the project. The interaction of students with adults who sincerely care, is a basic asset of PEP. Out of this concern for the individual student, it is hoped he will gain a more positive self-image, and that he will strengthen a willingness and ability to be concerned for others.

College students on the staff lived in the dorms with the students, and spent much of the day (and often late into the night) in close contact with their group of youngsters. Four professional guidance counselors worked with individuals and small groups meeting each week, and sometimes with sessions several times a day when specific problems arose. Continual contacts with the teachers, during the small classes, trips, meals, games and sitting-on-the-grass conversations, provided numerous channels for exposure to adults in a wide range of situations. (It is also true that the adults learned much from the summer's experience.) Peer relationships were also a very important part of the process to get students to see themselves and one another in new ways and with greater understanding.

Reinforcing the multisensory emphasis of the arts, and the human relations concerns, were trips to such places as Howe Caverns, the New York State Capital and State Museum, Catskill Game Farm, Lake George, Barge Lock Canals. These offered fun, new perceptions, and demands on self control in strange environments. Selected movies ("Marceau in the Park," "Raisin in the Sun," "On the Waterfront," etc.), a diversified physical education program, talent nights, washing their own clothes at the laundromat, daily meals (a few had to learn first how to use the eating equipment), a book and reading program, all served as channels for the purposes of the program.

There are numerous problems in first year operations of a program of this complexity. Within the broad objectives of the project, there is much room for varied opinions about sub-goals and for different hierarchies of values. Further issues arise out of differences in beliefs about ways to achieve ends. Typical issues included staff discussions of freedom and authority; structure and nonstructure; consistency and flexibility; and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. In concrete terms, these abstract concepts involve such practical problems as: whether bed hour, class attendance, no smoking, and other rules should be strictly enforced from the very first, even if large numbers of students respond by leaving the program after the first week; whether students should be required to take music (or dance, or art), or whether they should be given the option to choose all their activities; how to balance the concern for physical property or control over students' free time, with concern for provid-

Director John Motley — a competent and charismatic administrator and teacher.

ing opportunities for students to learn self control; etc. Mrs. Eileen B. Murray, director of household and food services, and Mr. Richard C. Murray, assistant business manager of the college, at the center of daily operations, helped solve difficult food, household, and maintenance problems.

Certainly adult patience fades sometimes in the face of hour by hour, day by day roughhousing, disobedience, inattention, discourtesy, stealing, swearing, displays of violence, misuse of equipment and facilities. These were not dominant behaviors, but they occurred far more frequently than most of the staff had anticipated. It is useful to recall there was a compounding of background forces involved: these youngsters were of junior high school age, from economically deprived backgrounds, with two-thirds representing racial minorities, many of whom had emotional problems. Demands on the staff required delayed reactions and attempts to explain to students reasons for adult decisions. These demands meant encouraging students to take part in decisions, knowing that students and staff and public might suffer the consequences of miscalculations in poor choices of value and inadequate knowledge. The program means allowing students at times to learn from errors, with attempts to guess at the degree of adult control needed to protect student and project from serious harm. There were times late at night when Director John Motley would say to me, "If we can just make it through one more day."

The results of this summer's program are currently being formally evaluated by the New York State Education Department. Since I gathered much of the data to be used in this evaluation, it is possible to make some tentative estimation of the results of the project. Early critics estimated that large members of students would drop out after a week of experiencing what was expected of them. In fact, only about one out of twelve withdrew. At the end of the summer, over 90 percent of the students indicated their hope to be invited to return for a second summer. Large numbers of the students felt they had gained new interests and skills, greater self understanding, more strength in coping with problems they faced at home, more appreciation of the difficulties of others. Personal observations of the staff strongly suggest that the students' attention spans increased; peer group control over lack of individual self-control began to supplement adult controls; many boys and girls learned to relate to one another on a basis of respect and enjoyment rather than treating each other as objects to use, or persons to fear; tolerance of differences among peers increased; marked improvements in rudimentary skills in the arts, with enjoyment in the experience, were evident; numerous breakthroughs were made in learning to accept writing as an interesting, useful means of communication; several became interested in reading for its own sake for the first time.

At the end of the summer, all the students made anonymous evaluations of each facet of the project. While a few comments were strongly negative, the overwhelming majority expressed marked, positive judgements.

I learned how to respect and give people a little consideration.

I'm not as bad and mean as I used to be, and I am not as free with my mouth.

I like listening to music besides Rock 'n Roll.

I just enjoy the way they treat you like a human being.

I think I can now do what I want to, if I try.

I saw how people work so hard to help others, and I have learned to appreciate things I didn't like at first.

My interests are wider, but one summer cannot change a whole life time of problems and habits.

It gave me a chance to look at life; to do more than have kicks.

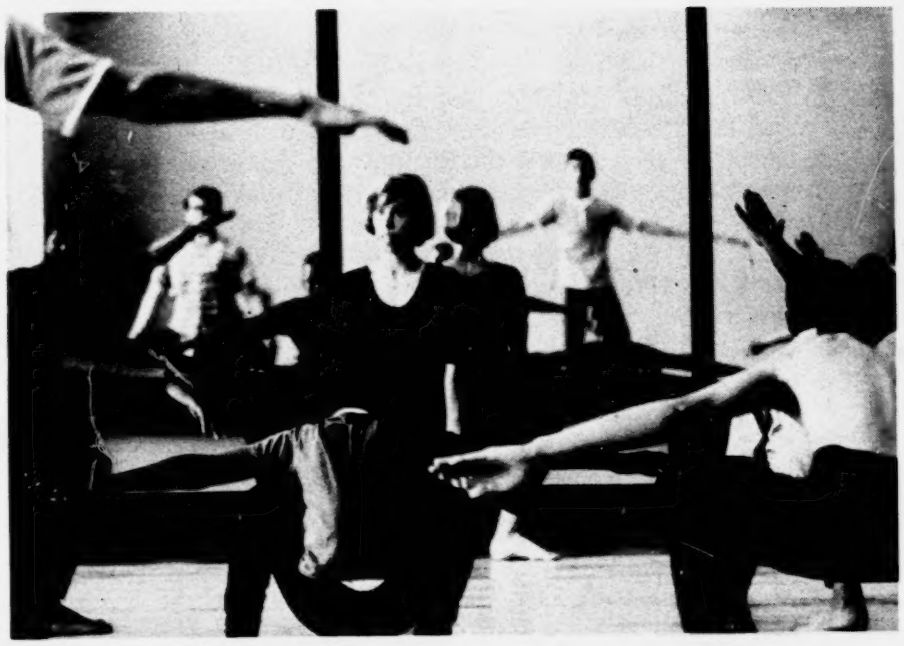
I feel it is time for me to wake up, and stop letting people push me around.

Follow-up procedures by PEP staff during the coming school year, through the school guidance counselors and teachers, will help build on the summer gains. For the younger students, a second summer with PEP is probable. (It seems likely that the program will be continued at Skidmore this coming summer.) And after that, projects such as Upward Bound are possibilities. Against the background of a broad and serious national problem, PEP at Skidmore is one more link in the many efforts to create equivalent opportunities for all our youth. Educational experimentation, teamed with economics, political, and social reforms, can break the vicious cycle that produces today's large numbers of disadvantaged.

Communication is stimulated by trying to describe, while blindfolded, unknown objects.

Each student attended different classes throughout the summer — introduction to a musical instrument . . .

. . . dance — ballet, modern, and ethnic . . .



. . . arts or crafts . . .

Absorption in the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center

Leave taking — "I just enjoy the way they treat you like a human being."